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KEISTER, PHILIP L.

STEPHENSON COUNTY  
ROADS.

(1955?)

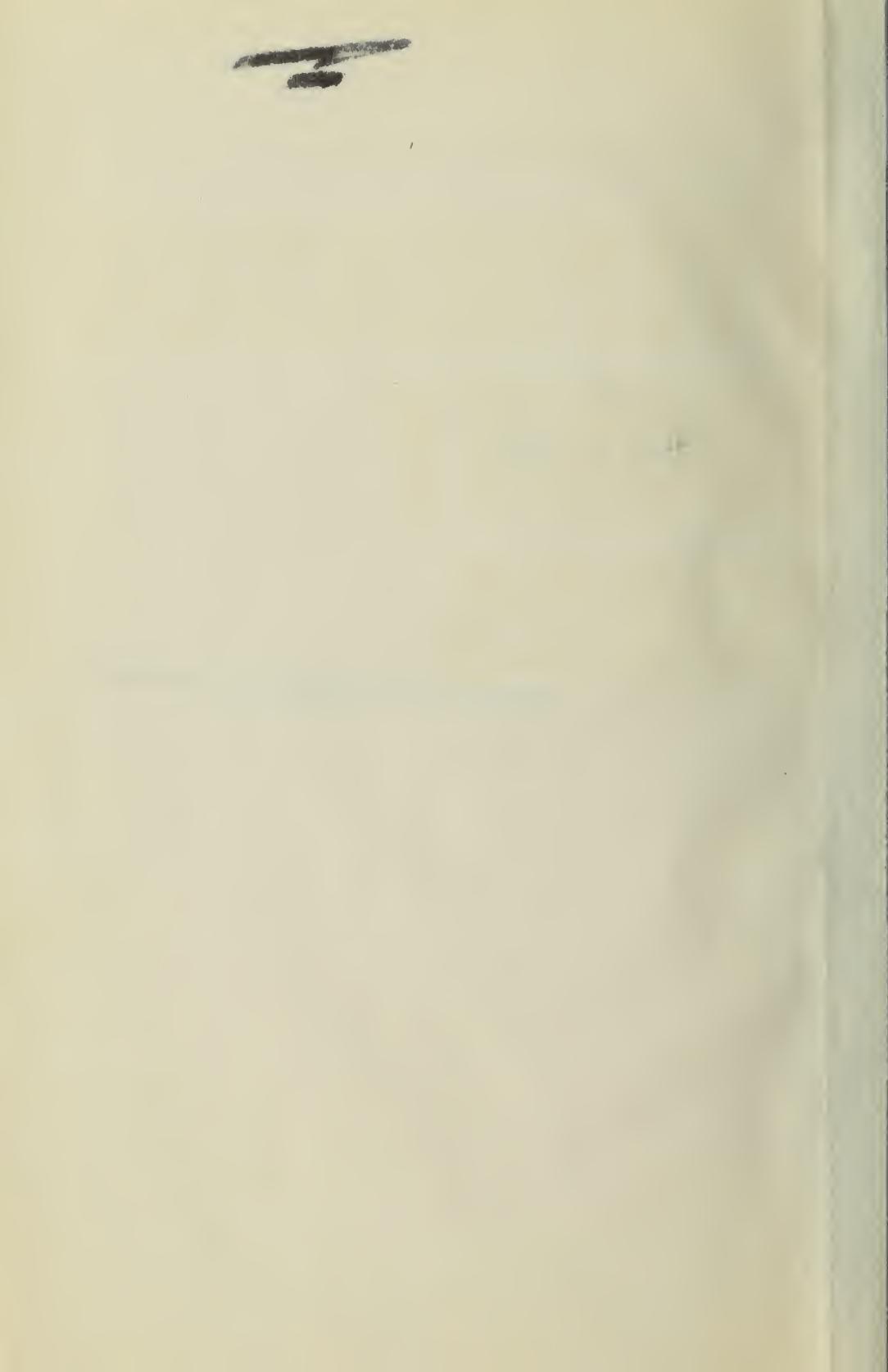
ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

1862-1863

**ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY**

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PRICE 25c

# STEPHENSON COUNTY ROADS

*Compiled by Philip L. Keister  
Published under the auspices of the  
Stephenson Co. Historical Society.  
Sponsored and printed by  
Robert F. Koenig*



# **STEPHENSON COUNTY ROADS**

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### **Permanent home of the Stephenson County Historical Society**

The home was built in 1857 by Oscar Taylor. The house was dedicated one Sunday night by the famous abolitionist singers, The Hutchinson Family, who sang "Home, Sweet Home." Many famous people have been entertained in this home, including

Horace Mann, educator  
Horace Greeley, founder N. Y. Tribune  
John G. Saxe, humorist and poet  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, essayist, poet, philosopher  
Edward Everett Hale, clergyman and author  
Edith Hibbart, critic and poet  
Bayard Taylor, writer and traveler  
George Sumner, Ambassador to France  
James Russell Lowell, poet, essayist, diplomat  
N. Artemus Ward, humorist  
Jane Addams, of Hull House.

### **Past Presidents, Stephenson County Historical Society**

1. L. E. Mensenkamp
2. H. K. Baltzer
3. Mrs. J. R. Nesbitt
4. Miss Mabel Goddard
5. Philip L. Keister
6. Mrs. Wm. W. Zeiders
7. Mrs. E. G. McCulloch

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*See first page*

# INTRODUCTION

These pages tell us a fascinating history of the roads in our county. To most of us, roads are taken for granted. After we read Mr. Keister's history, we appreciate better how roads followed the settlers and helped the wilderness to become a single community.

Until the summer of 1954, only a few knew of this history of Stephenson county roads. During that summer, Mrs. E. G. McCulloch, then president of the Stephenson County Historical Society, issued a call for a picnic dinner.

The picnic was held on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, with tables set on the lawn in front of the Historical Society's permanent home. The dinner was better than the usual potluck affair, and a fine spirit prevailed.

After the tables were cleared, Phillip Keister, Secretary, spoke to the society for the first time on the exhaustive study he had made of early roads in Stephenson county.

Seldom has the society listened to a discussion with greater interest. Mr. Keister has an exceptional genius for this kind of research, and deserves much credit for the history recorded in this brochure.

Many still living will remember some of the grist mills which existed in earlier days and are shown on the specially prepared map, pages 12 and 13. Some of our villages were then known by other names. Also some of the roads which led to the grist mills have been abandoned for permanent roads along the township lines.

Mr. Keister made this study because of his keen interest in preserving our history. The Stephenson

County Historical Society members appreciate what he has done and the fine example he has set for others to continue along similar lines.

When this brochure was about to go on the press, Howard B. Scholes, who has planned many circulars, brochures, and books of interest and value to this community, suggested that a few pictures in this book would enhance its value and promote greater interest from the public.

The brochure is published under the auspices of the Stephenson County Historical Society, with the hope that other members may be encouraged to make similar studies and to do brochures which will also be of great value to future generations.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert H. Beving".

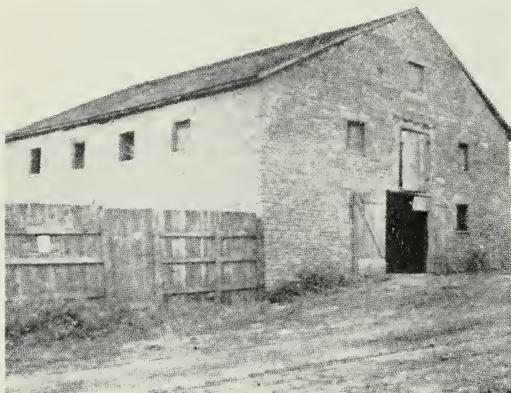
# The Early Roads of Stephenson County

*by Philip L. Keister*

Very little has been written about the early roads of Stephenson County, Illinois. This is interesting because so much has been said about the Frink & Walker stage coaches, the Conestoga wagons with their oxen, and the pioneer families who migrated west to settle in our beautiful county. But over what sort of roads did these vehicles and those who rode in them travel? The answer is very different from what one might expect looking at a present-day road map of our county. The facts we find disclose a very well located and long range road plan which showed good judgment and common sense, both of which attributes our pioneer ancestors possessed and well knew how to use.

Prior to 1819, Northwestern Illinois was a wilderness with no white settlers. In that year, Galena was settled and the mining boom for lead ore grew and attracted settlers. By 1827, Jo Daviess County was erected and included present-day Stephenson County. In that same year, Oliver W. Kellogg blazed the Kellogg Trail from Ft. Clark (Peoria) to Dixon's Ferry across Rock River, and from there to Galena, via the southwest corner of Stephenson County. Kellogg built the cabin near the present monument about one mile southeast of Kent as a trading post and stopping point on the road which served as a mail route and overland road. This early road, which ran along the high ridge across present Loran and Kent Townships, was the first road in our county. In May and June 1832, it served the Indians and their white pursuers, the Army and Militia. At Kellogg's old cabin took place the last major battle of the Black Hawk War fought on Illinois soil—the beginning of the end of the Indian menace in our area. After the Battle of the Bad Axe and Black Hawk's arrest in early August 1832, Northwestern Illinois was open to settlers who could come and expect to live in peace.

In 1833, William Waddams settled in present-day West Point Township in the area that became known as Waddams Grove, about a mile northeast of present Waddams Grove village. Waddams was the first permanent white settler in our county and,



Stage barn at  
Waddams, probably  
somewhere in the  
Waddams Grove area.  
There was no village  
of Waddams at the  
time.

as so many who followed him, was a disappointed lead miner who better knew how to make a living tilling the soil. He found our county a garden spot in which to settle. The year 1834 saw a few more settlers and some travel across our county. But the next year, 1835, saw the real beginning of a movement of settlement all over our county. Thomas Crane built his cabin and trading post in Sec. 29 north of present Baileyville on what was then being traveled as a road from Rockford to Cherry Grove, where it intersected the Kellogg Trail, and from there went to Savanna. Crane had lived at Cherry Grove earlier. He was the first postmaster in the Freeport area and his post office served Freeport until 1837. Of course, there was very little mail and almost no settlers, so that the job of postmaster didn't amount to much. The important thing about Crane's Grove settlement is that it grew up on an early road which was the earliest route of travel east and west in our county. The road lost out to the Old State Road which soon came into existence a few miles to the north of it. However, this road ran on the high ground or ridge across the southeastern part of the county and was recognized as a road on land survey maps filed by the government and by references in the laying out of other roads, as well as references to it elsewhere. It was made a State Road in 1839 by Act of Mar. 2, 1839. Daniel W. Wootan was one of the commissioners to lay it out.



Old French hotel,  
where Licondo hotel,  
Freeport, now stands.

The two main east-west arteries of travel from 1836 to 1853 were the Old State Road and the Rockford-Mineral Point Road. The Old State Road is the only one of the early main roads that survived and now carries Route 20 from the east line of the county to south of Lena and the county black top road runs from that point to the Jo Daviess County line. The old State Road became generally traveled by 1835 as settlers started to migrate into our area in numbers. It was made a State Road by Act of Jan. 15, 1836 (Laws of 1836, Pg. 216). The road ran from Meachum's Grove, just west of Chicago near the DuPage County line, to Elgin, Belvidere, Rockford (Midway), Twelve Mile Grove, and to Galena by the north route. James Gifford, Daniel Haight and Josiah Goodhue were the commissioners. By Act of Mar. 1, 1837, the commissioners were authorized to map the road and file maps at Galena and Chicago. By June 5, 1837, we know the road was officially laid out because the Commissioners of Stephenson County divided the portion in our county into three road districts for supervision and maintenance.

The Old State Road was not the first State Road to Galena from Chicago. The original Galena to Chicago State Road ran via Dixon and was created by Act of Jan. 7, 1833 (Laws of 1833, pg. 176). It ran via Pleasant Valley and Cherry Grove, missing our county entirely. It was also a portion of the Galena-Dixon-Peoria road which short cut the old Kellogg Trail which ran about 10 miles to the east, crossing the southwest corner of Stephenson County. An excellent survey of this state road is in existence in the state archives.

The Old State Road via Rockford and Freeport carried the burden of most of the east-west travel and the growing village of Freeport, late Baker's Ferry or Winneshiek, soon became an

important stopping point on the road, which carried the stages of John Frink & Co. (later Frink & Walker) from Chicago to Galena after 1838. It also carried a good deal more tonnage in wheat from Northwestern Illinois to Chicago in heavy wagons which returned filled with metal and manufactured goods for the pioneers' stores of our county. Freight rates were so high that the freight on the return trips made the trip possible. A system of inns grew up along the road, making a stopping place for the stages and travelers each five or six miles.

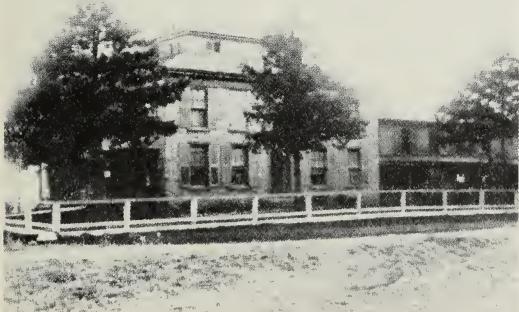
The Rockford-Mineral Point Road, or what might be termed the "Old North Road," was likewise an early through route which carried a good deal of traffic. It ran from Aurora to DeKalb to Rockford and then to Trask's Ferry, Epply's Mill, Rock Grove, Oneco, Brewster's Ferry and on to Mineral Point. It was made a State Road by Act of Mar. 2, 1839 (Laws of 1839, pg. 64). This road was a big factor in the early importance and location of all three of the early communities of Rock Grove, Oneco and Winslow. Both Rock Grove and Oneco were flourishing villages prior to 1850, while Winslow never recovered from the loss of its early importance as a business center after the coming of the railroads, which drained off the traffic formerly traveling on the old north road.

The old road is closely followed from Winslow to Oneco but little else remains except the main street through Rock Grove which follows the odd angle of the old road. This is also the case at Oneco. This road was one of the first group of roads laid out in Stephenson County on June 5, 1837, but it may have been a Jo Daviess County road from Ransomburg to Chicago laid out in 1835. Most traffic was coming from the east, and most of the settlers arrived via the early main roads. Compared to 1955 standards, they were poor excuses to be called roads, but from 1836 to 1853, they were our main arteries to carry practically all travel, including grain hauled to market at Chicago or Galena and all goods that came in to be sold in the area. But the most important of all traffic was over 10,000 settlers who came to make Stephenson County their homes from 1836 to 1853. In addition, they carried much through traffic to Galena and eastern Iowa, and into Southern Wisconsin.

Stephenson County was erected from Jo Daviess County on March 4, 1837. The counties in Illinois were run by a County Commissioners' Court made up of three county commissioners. It was not until 1848 that a new constitution in Illinois permitted the "Township—Board of Supervisors" form of local govern-

ment, similar to the Pennsylvania system and that of New York State from which most of the settlers had come. Stephenson County, with over two-thirds of the other Illinois counties, reorganized in 1849 into the township form of government. The County Commissioners left us one very fine volume of their proceedings, dealing with five main subjects: and the first of these was roads; secondly, building a jail and courthouse; next, the selection of jurors and judges and clerks of election; and of course the payment of bills, if they could scratch up enough money to pay them. The late '30s and '40s were hard times and money was scarce on the frontier. Some of this money came from the ferry and grocery (saloon) licenses granted.

The County Commissioners met the first time on May 8, 1837, at Wm. Baker's cabin in what was later that year to become the Town of Freeport, promoted by Baker, Kirkpatrick, Galbraith & Co. At that time, there were a few settlers all over the county. They were fast being joined by new neighbors coming in from the various places in the East, mostly from New York State and Ohio, but later from Pennsylvania. These settlers were traveling between the various places on what seemed to them to be the practical, direct and easy routes, following a few simple rules of road location—such as staying on high ground, avoiding swamps, finding good fords and still going as direct as possible between desired places. The County Commissioners spent most of their session on June 5, 1837 dealing with the county roads. Surely most of these roads were already some sort of trail that was being traveled. The laying out and survey of a road only made it legal and gave some assurance that it would be improved with labor and tax money, including such conveniences as wooden bridges, drainage in wet places, rocks and logs in sink holes and other minor improvements.



Hunt Inn, an old stage tavern about six miles east of Freeport on the Old Stage Road (now Route 20).

To understand the road system as it grew and developed, the reader must stop and think of the places to which those people would need to travel. There were the grist mills which began early and also the saw mills to produce badly needed lumber. Then there were the ferries across the Pecatonica River and the accompanying inn run by the ferryman. There were a few crude stores or trading posts, and a few inns, but the days of the church, the country schoolhouse and any sort of village as was located in the East were all still to come in the future. They grew up around the mills, ferries, inns and road junctons. The most interesting thing about a study of our early road system is this very thing—it is the reason why much of our county is as it is and why the villages and towns developed as they did.

Now to get to the roads themselves: On June 5, 1837, the County Commissioners ordered viewers to inspect and locate the following roads which were approved within a month or two in all cases:

A road from Freeport (Baker's Ferry) to Brewster's Ferry across Cedar Creek (Cedarville), Richland Creek (Red Oak) to Brewster's Ferry and to the state line. Brewster's Ferry was 1½ miles down the Pecatonica River from present Winslow. It was an important place from 1837 to 1844 when the Boston Land Company laid out and promoted Winslow. In fact, it was probably more important than Freeport in June 1837. This old road has a short segment left from Cedarville to Red Oak. The most of the road was re-located.

A road from Freeport to James Timms (the Old Kellogg cabin, sometimes called Burr Oak Grove, near Kent) and then to the west line of the county in the direction of Savanna. It was divided into two districts, with James Timms as the supervisor of the portion west of Yellow Creek. This road seems to have been a link from the old State Road at Freeport west to connect with the old Kellogg Trail to Galena. By this time, a cutoff or short cut known as the Lewiston Trail was in use from Derinda (later Lehner's Corners) east of Elizabeth to Dixon, via Pleasant Valley. Hence, very little traffic moved between Dixon and Galena via Timms. There was a road running on the ridge southwest from Timms to Savanna. This road was probably the Dublin Road as we know it from the Centennial area to Willet's Bridge about a mile east of the monument in Kent Township, although it possibly could have gone farther south through Andrews' Mills and north-westerly to Timms. We do know that a road ran on that route later, as shown by the land survey maps.



Hess' Mill, no longer standing but well remembered by many Freeporters still living. Located southwest of Freeport on Forest Road. The millrace and dam are broken down but may still be seen.

A road from Baker's Ferry (East Freeport) to the southwest part of Rock Grove and then to the State Line. This road followed the high ground and ridge but still ran fairly direct—a much better located road than our modern road takes to Rock Grove. Part of this old road is shown on the land survey maps (Twp. 28 North, Range 8 East). This road shows the early importance of Rock Grove.

A road from Freeport northeasterly to intersect with the county road from Farwell's Ferry on the township line between Twps. 27 & 28, near Sec. 32 & 33, Range 9 East (in present Rock Run Township). This was the main road to the area that later became Rock Run Township, and to the area of the three mills on Rock Run. Parts of it still exist in Lancaster Township. It was a direct route and was dropped in the great movement to put all roads on the section lines in the 1850's.

A road from the west line of the county on or near where the old road now runs from the Climas settlement to Brewster's Ferry (Winslow area), crossing the Pecatonica River at Brewster's Ferry, then to Richland Creek (via Oneco), crossing on the bridge, thence to on or near the south end of Rock Grove (site of the present village), thence to the east line of the county (via Blackmore's later, Epply's Mill). This is our old friend, the Old North Road from Rockford to Mineral Point which served the north side of our county and southern Wisconsin beyond.

The last road mentioned at the June 5, 1837 meeting was a road from the east county line from the Old State Road at Twelve Mile Grove (just over in Winnebago County) by way of Daniel W. Wootan's and Wickham's Ferry (near what was later Nevada, an early railroad station on the G & C U RR), thence across the Pecatonica River, thence by the most direct route to Brewster's



## WISCONSIN

STATE LINE

This historical map of Oneida County, New York, from 1853, provides a detailed view of the county's terrain, roads, and early settlements. The map is oriented with North at the top.

**Key Features and Labels:**

- Rivers and Creeks:** Mohawk River, Oneida River, Yellow Creek, Rock Creek, and various unnamed streams.
- Settlements and Mills:**
  - Northwest Quadrant:** Curtis's Mill, Rock Grove, Blackmore's Mill, Farwell's Mill, Davis Mill, Cedar Creek Mill, and numerous smaller mills labeled "MILL".
  - Southwest Quadrant:** Freeport, Bakers Ferry (1830), Yellow Creek, Liberty & Hess Mill, and Ocrains Grove.
  - East Central Area:** Wootan & Whitehouse Ferry, Brown's Mill, and the state line between New York and Oneida.
  - Far East:** Irish Grove, Farwell, and Turner's Mill.
- Geographical Labels:** Range 8 East, Range 9 East, and various townships labeled "Twp 28 N", "Twp 26 N", and "Twp 25 N".
- Roads and Distances:** Roads are marked with numbers such as 1837, 1839, 1841, 1842, 1844, 1853, 1855, 1857, 1858, 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1866, 1867, 1868, and 1869.
- Other:** A small box in the bottom left corner contains the text "1853 MAP ON COUNTY NOIS ROADS 1842 Twp 25 N".

Ferry. This road was an attempt at a third main route to serve the center of the county and crossed the river at an early and long forgotten ferry run by Daniel Wootan, who later was bitten by the California gold bug fever and died on the way west. Nevada was the early railway station for that area, undoubtedly due to the early roads leading to the ferry nearby, but was supplanted by Ridott by 1860. An early wooden bridge crossed the river northwest of Nevada someplace near the old ferry site.

At the June 5, 1837 session, ferry licenses were granted to Wootan & Wickham's Ferry and to Wm. Baker at Freeport. In September L. W. Streater received a license to operate the Brewster's Ferry, all across the Pecatonica River. Eldridge Farwell operated a ferry at the site now known as Farwell's Bridge, near the Winnebago County line, while Robert McConnell must have had some sort of ferry at his settlement at what is present-day McConnell. A man named Murdaugh operated a ferry in Sec. 9 in present-day Harlem Township about 1½ miles south of Damascus. An early river ferry was a crude flat boat large enough to carry a team or wagon, or both, and was poled across the river. The ferryman lived nearby. Rates were high and traffic sparse.

The next road on the list was a road from the state line to Rock Grove, and then south to D. W. Wootan's Ferry and then to the south line of the county in the direction of North Grove. This was done at the July 11, 1837 meeting. On Sept. 4, 1937, a road was laid out from Freeport to Brewster's Ferry on the west side of the river, passing Waddams Branch at or near the Old Indian Trail. This road emphasized the importance of Brewster's Ferry in 1837. These roads which were approved in 1837 show the early important routes of travel and most likely confirmed trails already being traveled.



Stage Tavern, Eleroy  
(located half a mile  
west of Eleroy) on the  
Old State Road. Still  
standing as of 1955,  
just off Route 20.

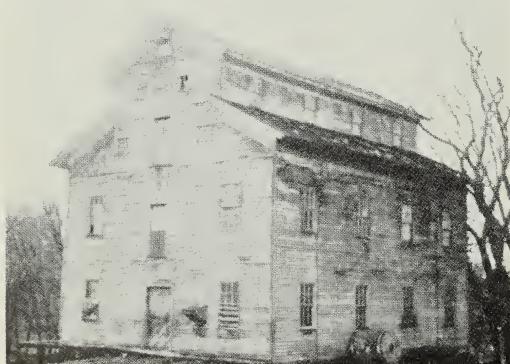
On March 5, 1838, the commissioners' court met and appointed viewers to consider a road from the south county line near Lost Grove to Kirkpatrick's Mills (Mill Grove in Loran Township), passing Waddams Grove in that direction to Curtis' old mill to the north county line. (Curtis' old mill may have been the site of Winslow or farther south on a branch of Waddams Creek.) Curtis moved over to the site of Orangeville about 1838 and built a mill which later became Bowers' Mill. The second road taken up at this meeting was a road from John B. Kaufman's (Twp. 27 N, Range 7 East) to James Thompson's, near Waddams Grove, 4 miles 155 rods, which paralleled the Old State Road, but was vacated July 10, 1839, as useless. It was an attempt at a cutoff from a point in present Harlem Township to cut off the large curve or sweep to the south which takes the old road along high ground through present Eleroy. Such a cutoff would cross many ravines and streams and is a good example of shorter distance not offsetting good terrain.

The meeting of June 5, 1838 rejected a road from Dr. Van Valzah's Mill (later Cedarville) on Cedar Creek to Martins and west. Dr. Thomas Van Valzah came from Union Co., Pa., and has



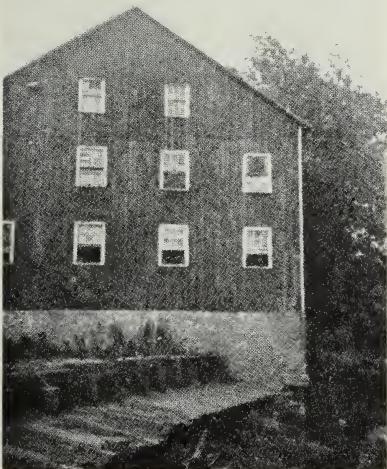
Birthplace of Jane Addams, world-famous social worker and founder of Hull House in Chicago. Her father was the owner of the Addams Mill, located across the road from the above home, which is still standing at Cedarville.

been described as the first Pennsylvania Dutchman to migrate to our county. He only remained here until he sold out to John H. Addams in 1844, but he carried back to Central Pennsylvania such enthusiasm for Stephenson County that by 1850 one-third of our county's citizens were Pennsylvania Dutch and had supplanted the New York Staters as the predominant group of settlers. Most of them came from Union, Centre and the other surrounding counties of Pennsylvania. This meeting also appointed Jesse Willet as supervisor of the road from the west line of the county to Yellow Creek. Willet lived on the west bank of Yellow Creek along the old Dublin Road about a mile east of Timm's place, which was the junction of the road from Freeport west with the old Kellogg Trail. On June 11, 1838, the commissioners appointed viewers for a road to run from Dr. Van Valzah's Mill (Cedaryville) to Martins, and then west to the State Road at Wad-dams Grove. Norman Phillips, the grandfather of Harry, J. Albert, and Dr. N. C. Phillips, was a viewer. This road ran in the neighborhood of Damaseus, and it is believed that it crossed the river on Murdaugh's Ferry and later on the bridge at Damascus. A long wooden bridge was built rather early and it served until 1886 when replaced with the present iron bridge. Another road referred to viewers that day was one from Robert Jones (near Buckeye Center corners) in course of New Mexico and then to the state line. New Mexico seems to be an early "lost" name. It is probable that it was located several miles southeast of present Orangeville. It is mentioned again on Mar. 29, 1839, when a road was laid out from Freeport northerly to New Mexico, then to the state line, to go the best direction for New Mexico, W. T. Crossing (?), Richland Creek at the point where Curtis is building



Addams' Mill, Cedar-ville. Occupied a site just across the road from the present site of the John H. Addams house, it was later moved and rebuilt into the barn now standing at the Addams homestead. It was one of the largest mills in the county and was run by the father of Jane Addams.

a mill (Orangeville) and then to the state line. A good guess is that this road ran east of Cedarville and then to Orangeville and north to the state line. All early roads towards Cedarville and north swung a wide arc from the ferry in present East Freeport and stayed on high ground and followed a ridge northwesterly towards Cedarville. There was no bridge or ferry north of Freeport for a few years.



Mill near Farwell's bridge, about four miles east of Ridott. No longer standing.

Another road considered on June 11, 1838 was a road from W. Jaggers at the east county line and then through the Town of Farwell (just south of present Farwell's bridge in Ridott Township), then on the nearest course to intersect with the Savanna Road at Crane's Grove. A study of a topographic map shows this route could go rather direct on high ground to join the Rockford-Savanna Road which ran across the southeast and south side of the county. The Village of Farwell started in 1837 in competition with Freeport and a few others, only to drop by the wayside. E. Farwell was the promoter, but unfortunately the main artery of traffic was some two miles south of his town-site on the Old State Road so that his town died before the coming of the Galena railroad in 1853 right through where his town was supposed to have been. The aged iron bridge across the Pecatonica River at the spot still carries on the name of Farwell. This road is one of the few good references to the early Rockford-Savanna Road through Crane's Grove, other than the statute of Mar. 2, 1839.

The next day, the commissioners ordered viewers appointed for a road southeast of Freeport to Yellow Creek and then the road was to divide, one fork going south and the other one going east. Loring Snow was a viewer. On Sept. 3, 1838, the commissioners ordered all roads surveyed which still remained un-surveyed.

On March 22, 1839, the road from Freeport to Crane's Grove via Seth Scott's, with Thomas Crane as a viewer, made the book. This is our present South Freeport road. Scott lived just south and west of the present railroad tracks where the road curves to the east to avoid rough terrain of Crane's Creek. On June 4, 1839, James Timms (at Kellogg's old fort) paid a fee to secure the viewers' fees for a road from Freeport in the direction of Galena to the west county line to continue on or near the course now traveled by the mail stage. This road ran to the Kent area but whether it went direct, via the present Stephenson Street Road, or via Andrews' Mill, we do not know. One can rest assured that it ran past James Timms' place (monument near Kent) or else Timms would not have deposited \$6 of his hard-earned money for its consideration. Chandler's 1829 map of Jo Daviess County showed a trail or road from Kellogg's cabin on west to present Elizabeth. It is believed that this road was some short cut being used by the stage which traveled that route, at least to some extent, and this petition was only to make it a legal road.

But the favorite of all the early roads came on June 4, 1839, when Conrad Van Brocklin plunked down six precious dollars to have the new direct Savanna to Freeport road laid out via Van Brocklin on Yellow Creek, then southwesterly to Cherry Grove and on to Savanna. Over this road came countless loads of lumber from the river port of Savanna to build many early Freeport buildings. It was the shortest route with light grades from a river steamer to Freeport. It was a direct and a through route which followed the good principles of road location, only to meet the fate of being railroaded out of existence before 1860. This road would have saved over five miles of travel to Savanna as compared with our present route to Savanna. It also marked the location for a sad piece of financial history in our county—the ill-fated Savanna line of the Racine and Mississippi Railroad, which located its line direct to Savanna, following closely the old direct wagon road and stage route. The panic of 1857, along with the heavy expense of grading high grades, bankrupted the company and many of its farmer stockholders who had mortgaged their farms to buy stock which would pay big dividends to pay off the mortgages. Its high grades and deep cuts still scar the landscape near Bolton and west of Freeport. There are a few segments of the old Savanna Road near Van Brocklin but most of

it was destroyed when the need for a direct road ceased with the coming of the railroads. This road was even made a State Road in 1853 (Laws of 1853, Page 137). D. A. Knowlton was one of the commissioners. It was a very busy road that fall and in 1854, but with the completion of the Galena & Chicago Union and Illinois Central Railroads to Galena, there was little traffic.

Another road created on June 4, 1839, was the road from Freeport from the end of South Van Buren Street to the south end of the county. This probably was a road that ran in the area of Oak St. and the Walnut St. Road south of Freeport, a sort of west side road to Crane's Grove.

The next day, on June 5, 1839, the commissioners ordered viewed a road from the Town of Farwell (Platted, Book "A" of Deeds, at page 294-5) via Turner's Mill (across river from Farwell), Salisbury's Mill, Flower's Mill (later Davis' Mill) to Rock Grove. The same day a road was ordered viewed from Freeport to the east end of the county to Rockford, but no identification is given. It may have been north of the river. In July 1839, a road was ordered viewed from the Winnebago County line to the State Road near Sanford Niles. This was a point about two miles west of the county line and ran to the northerly side of Twelve Mile Grove over in Winnebago County. The old State Road ran through Twelve Mile Grove, coming into Stephenson County at the southwest corner of the grove and staying on higher ground and coming west to join the present Route 20 location near Niles farm.

On Dec. 3, 1839, the commissioners filed a report received on a State Road to run from Christianville, McHenry County, to Mineral Point, supposedly over the "old north road." The same day they appropriated the sum of \$500 from the Public Improvement Funds to be furnished by the state for a bridge across the Pecatonica River at Freeport, "when the money is received from the state." The first bridge was built in 1840, ending Baker's and later Eads' Ferry. J. A. Clark was given the right to build a bridge at Freeport by Act of Jan. 27, 1840 (Laws of 1840, pg. 26).

The Laws of 1839, pg. 64, provided in an Act of Mar. 2, 1839, for a State Road from LaSalle via Troy Grove, Inlet Grove, Bloomingdale on Rock River, to Freeport and then to Brewster's Ferry to the state line and on to Mineral Point. Lemuel W. Streater of Brewster's Ferry was a commissioner. This road would seem to have covered already existing roads being used.

The year 1840 saw a number of roads laid out, starting on Mar. 9, with a road from J. W. Shulls' (over the Wisconsin line but not present Shullsburg) from the state line to Brewster's Ferry. On June 4, a road from Epply's Mill (later Epplyana, near Rock City) to Curtis' Mill (Orangeville) on Richland Creek



Curtis Mill, located in what is now Orangeville. Built in 1850 by John Bowers who ran the mill. Part of the lumber came from Chicago by team. The building cost about \$8000. The above building replaced an earlier mill on the same site built by John Curtis.

was ordered viewed. While on September 7, a road was ordered from Cedar Creek Mill to Curtis Mill on Richland Creek (later Bowers' Mill and now Orangeville). The next day a road was ordered from the Bridge at Freeport (note, a bridge, not a ferry slip) to Davis' Mill, and then to the east end of the county via James Snyder's. This meant it ran to Davis' store and mill about 1½ miles south of Rock City and then to the Rockford-Mineral Point Road. This mill and store were the center of trade in what is now Rock Run Township and between the Epply Mill to the north and the Salisbury's Mill to the South. Rock Run was a swift and beautiful stream and turned four mill wheels very early. The Salisbury's Mill later became the Carnefix Mill and was built out of stone. It is still standing, the last mill in our county that is on its original site and fairly intact. The Epply Mill stood until several years ago, when it was torn down after many years of neglect. It likewise was stone and had so little salvage that it survived as a barn long beyond its days as a mill. The last road listed in 1840 was one from Winslow to Pells Manny's farm (where he invented the reaper) and then on south to Kirkpatrick's Mill on Yellow Creek (Mill Grove in Loran Township).

In 1841, the last of the early roads was approved September 6. It was a long semi-through route which connected the Rockford and Mineral Point Road on the east and the Old State Road on the west. It ran from Michael Welsh's to Salisbury's Mill on Rock Run, then to Snyder's, then to the southeast corner of Section 16, Township 28 North, Range 8 East (near Alfolkey), then west to John Fulgate's, then to Reitzell's Mill on Richland Creek (Buena Vista), then to Robert McConnell's on the Pecatonica, then west to intersect with the Old State Road to Galena west of Waddams Grove. This road was laid out four rods wide. Much of it still exists west of Buena Vista with light grades and broad

curves without a care for the section lines. Near the west end is the old stone Montague house, which was one of the fine old early houses of our county built by early settlers.

Another source of material for early roads is the book known as "The Government Field Notes" filed in our county by the government showing the final surveys of all the land made up to 1842. About one-half of these fine maps show the early roads and check out closely with the records left by the County Commissioners' Court. But a number of other roads are shown, and some segments of roads. Sad, but true, about half of the congressional survey township maps do not show any roads. The mill ponds are shown and a few other man-made things, such as the village of Freeport.

Another item we find that shows progress are the references in the statutes to the early bridge companies. The Winslow Bridge Co. was chartered by Act of Mar. 2, 1839 (Private Law of 1839, pg. 184). The New Pennsylvania (McConnell) Bridge was chartered by Act of Mar. 1, 1843 (Laws of 1843, pg. 47). These bridges were given the right to charge toll and were private enterprises which were venturesome enough to have confidence in the growing community to invest their money in long wooden bridges over the Pecatonica River.

Now, why would such a well located system of local and through roads almost completely disappear by the time the 1871 Plat Book was compiled? The first of two important reasons was the coming of the railroads and their iron horses to pull heavy loads very fast and very cheap. The Galena and Chicago Union Railroad track arrived at Freeport on Aug. 31, 1853. The Illinois Central Railroad promptly built on to Lena, Warren and Galena, where it arrived in 1854. This meant that the need for through roads vanished rapidly as most of the traffic moved by train instead, except for a few venturesome immigrants who had more time than train fare. The local traffic traveled only to the railroad towns and the need for a good short distance road was not nearly so important. The second reason for the great revision of the road map was the desire of landowners to have their farms square and not cut up by angling or curved roads. Back East, the roads were located in the valleys and on the ridges and the land surveys tied in with them. They were all logical lines. In the Midwest, the land was all surveyed and sold in squares called sections and quarter sections, so that the lines between these squares were convenient and logical places for roads in the minds of the landowners. The coming of the agricultural revolution in the use of farm implements and the production of farm grains brought the farmer to realize that he could farm easier with the

new machines if he had square fields. Hence, the farmers made every effort to shift the early roads to the section lines. They were greatly aided in this with the coming of Township Organization in 1849, because this turned the local road administration over to them on a local and not a county level. The road commissioners cooperated with their neighbors who elected them to "Straighten out the roads." The Old State Road and a few other segments of early roads were all that survived this movement. Now we buy right of way to build roads that run direct, much to the ire of the farmer landowners.



Tisdell Inn on Old State Road, now Route 20, 5 miles west of Freeport. Built in 1852. It was a stopping place between Freeport and Dodd's Inn (Lena).

By 1920, when the automobile had proved its worth and demanded paved roads, we suddenly found ourselves burdened with the square corners and section line roads that added miles to go many places. Today, roads like Route 20, which follows much of the location of the Old State Road, are more logically and better located than our present road to Savanna, which travels miles out of the way to get there all because some enterprising landowners squared the road out of existence from 1853 to 1871.

The other great lesson we learn from a study of our early local roads is the fact that they are the key to much history in our county and explain the "Why" of many places and locations. A few examples are Rock Grove, Onecoo and Winslow on the "Old North Road." Crane's Grove, now only a memory, was on an im-

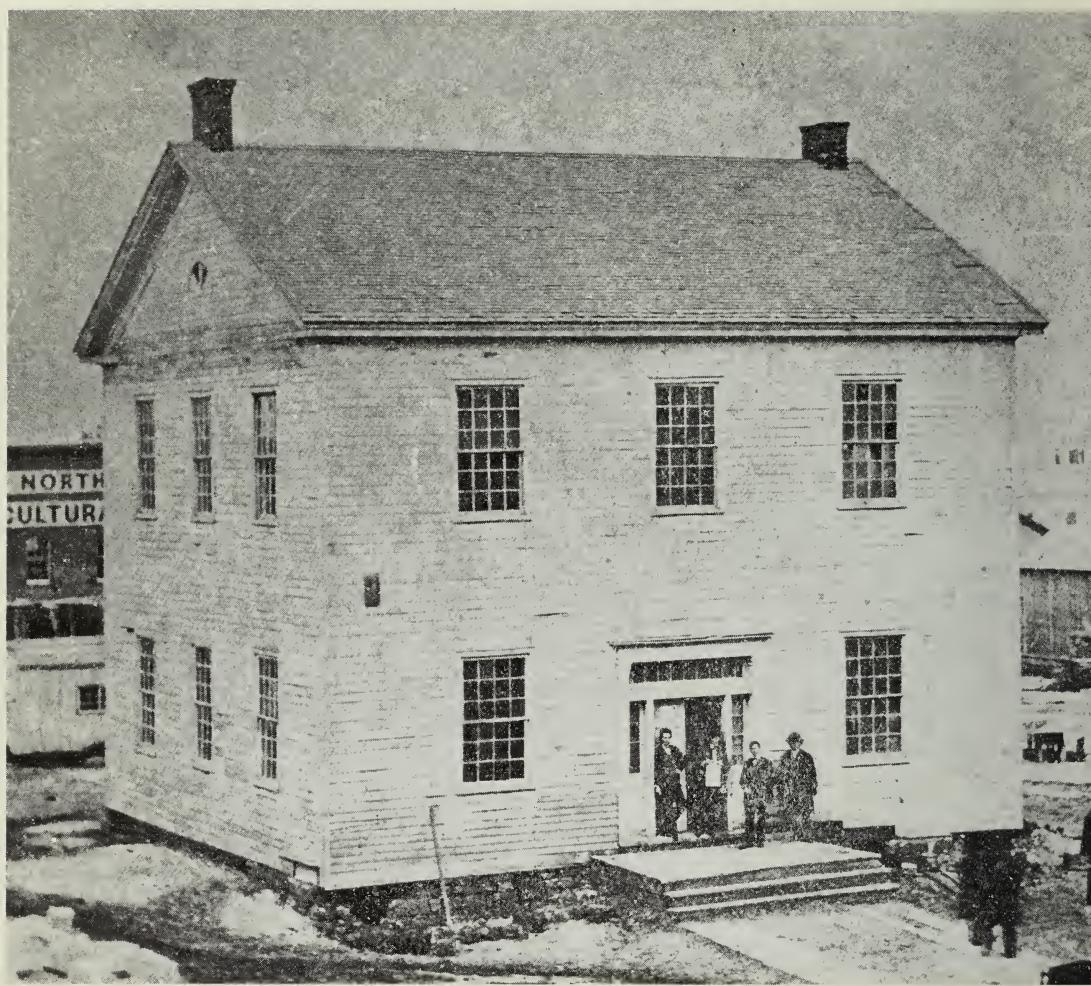
portant early road, now vanished. Cedarville grew up to a village in pre-railroad days because of its mill and the fine road center it attracted there. Lincoln Avenue was the early road west and soon Stephenson Street paralleled it, following not section lines but the contour and logical place to travel. The Timms place at the old Kellogg cabin was a road center, and Elida, then Samuel



S. F. Dodd's Inn, at Alida, now Lena. Built in 1848 to replace a log inn, "The Buckhorn Inn," on Old State Road, Freeport to Galena, now Lena Street in Lena. Stephen A. Douglas stopped here in the 1840's.

F. Dodds' Buckhorn Inn on the Old State Road, became Lena. On little Richland Creek, five mill wheels have turned the grain into flour and logs into boards. Most of these mills attracted roads, and then a village, so that we have Sciota Mills, Red Oak, Buena Vista and Orangeville today, where in each case, a mill was the beginning. Pearl City got its start as Andrews' Mill on Yellow Creek. But long before there was a village, there was a road center leading to the mill. Many early important points have vanished such as Kirkpatrick's Mill (Mill Grove), Wootan's Ferry, Farwell, Davis' Mill, New Mexico and Murdaugh's Ferry, and most famous of all early spots, Brewster's Ferry, only to mention a few.

After a bit of reflection on this early road system, we can say to our pioneer ancestors who settled Stephenson County, "well done; you knew how to locate roads and your locations would save us grading, gasoline and time today, as well as road building costs; a hundred years has shown how wise you were."

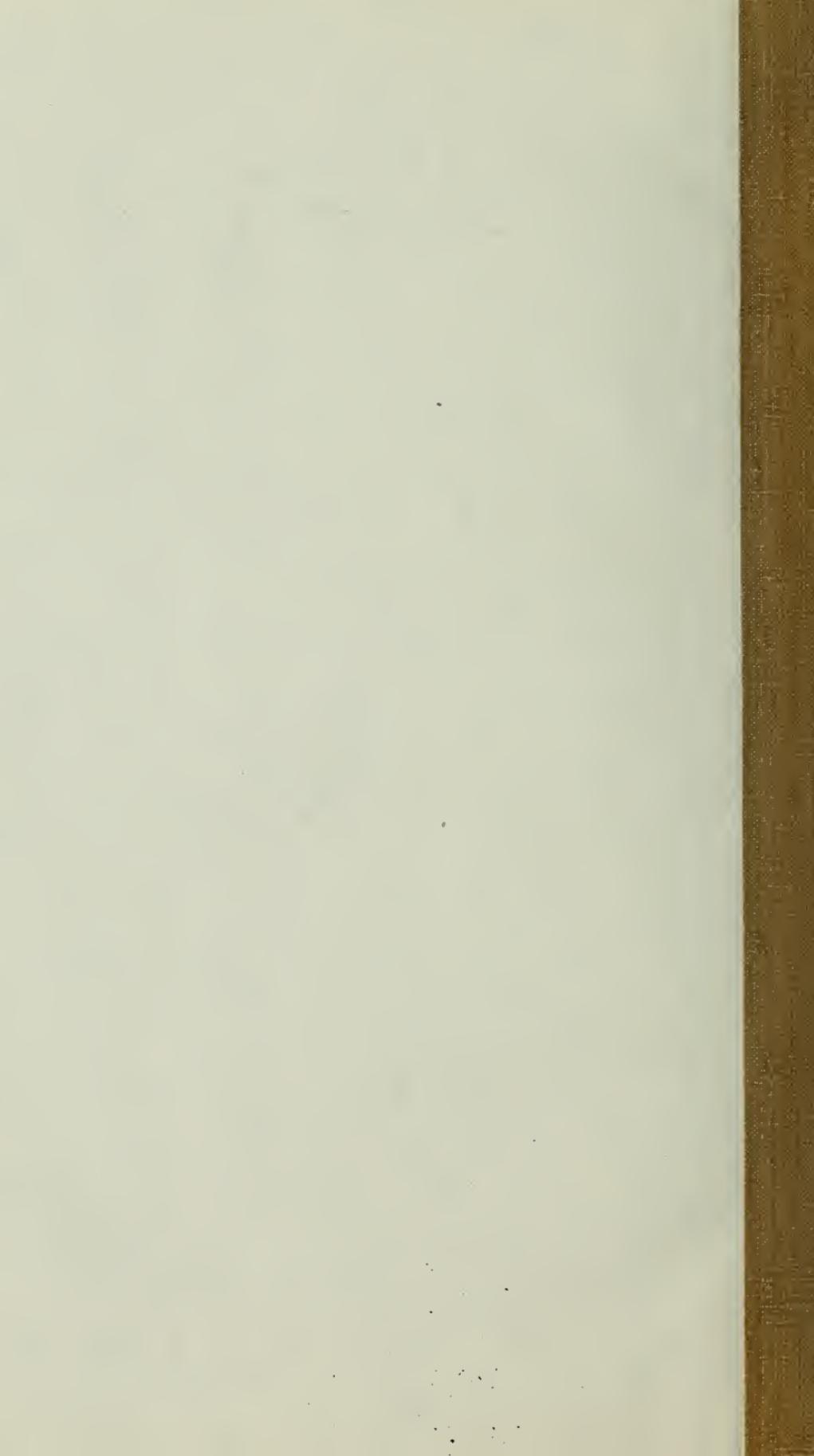


First Stephenson County Court House, just before it was moved to make room for the present court house. The above building was built 1838-40 and removed in 1870 to a site across from the present Union Dairy, Freeport. The building burned down in 1904.











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